

SUBCOMMITTEES

The SJRMP subcommittees are named after and assigned to focus on the six problem areas specifically identified in the legislation: flood protection, water quality, water supply, wildlife, fisheries, and recreation. During the past year each subcommittee prepared a draft report for its particular area of concern. The draft reports are included as appendices to this report (Appendices B through G). Following is a brief summary of each subcommittee's activities over the past year, along with goals and objectives for the coming year.

Flood Protection Subcommittee

The three primary goals of the flood protection subcommittee are to restore and maintain design flow capacity, provide the levee system with adequate structural integrity, and optimize operation of existing reservoirs.

The first goal is to restore and maintain the design flow capacity at design river stages in the designated floodway in each reach of the river system at the capacity that was presumed to be available when the relevant levees, upstream release schedules, and river bypasses were authorized.

The subcommittee has proposed that a dual-purpose project be developed and implemented which would achieve this goal and also address the wildlife subcommittee's goals that relate to the floodway. The San Joaquin River Flood Control Association has proposed more specific parameters for such a dual-purpose project.

This proposal has generated Advisory Council discussion on the institutional problems involved in assuring that dual- or multipurpose projects are effectively pursued in an unbiased and balanced manner with additive credit for each type of benefit in the project justification.

The second goal is to provide the levee system with adequate structural integrity to sustain prolonged design flood stages. This includes problems of seepage, boils, levee sloughing, and in some places, erosion. The Corps' San Joaquin Mainstem Study will address this goal.

The third goal is to optimize operation of existing reservoirs to protect downstream areas consistent with other authorized purposes and implement other means of reducing downstream peak flows by temporary storage on grasslands, by new storage, and by other means.

The Corps is committed to improving reservoir release schedules for three large reservoirs (New Don Pedro Reservoir, Lake McClure, and Millerton Lake). This new scheduling is expected to reduce peak downstream flows substantially during rain floods.

New reservoirs are being studied in connection with water supply, and overflow to grasslands is being jointly studied by several subcommittees.

The subcommittee has had regular interaction with other subcommittees. The chairman of the wildlife subcommittee has attended most flood protection meetings. There have also been joint meetings of these two subcommittees. The chairman of the flood protection committee attends most water quality committee meetings.

There is often substantial discussion of subcommittee interrelations at Action Team meetings and sometimes at council meetings. Flood protection and water supply representatives met with the Madera Irrigation District regarding its proposed Finegold Creek project. The flood protection subcommittee provided important input to the recreation subcommittee regarding the San Joaquin River Parkway Plan.

The flood protection subcommittee has a core group of representatives from the California Department of Fish and Game, San Joaquin River Flood Control Association, Lower San Joaquin Levee District, Bureau of Reclamation, San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors, Merced County Association of Governments, California Department of Conservation's Division of Mines and Geology, California Department of Water Resources, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Corps of Engineers. Other groups represented from time to time include private consultants and environmental organizations.

This subcommittee has met approximately once per month throughout the year. The subcommittee report on problems/issues and proposed actions is included in this report as Appendix B.

Water Quality Subcommittee

The water quality subcommittee, which was formed in the fall of 1990, addressed various topics including a water quality monitoring system and a drainage monitoring system.

The subcommittee prepared a grant application for a cooperative demonstration of real-time management of flows and salinities on the lower San Joaquin River system. The demonstration would document the feasibility of using real-time flow and salinity data to better manage drainage discharges and releases of high-quality water. The grant application has received highly favorable review by the State Water Resources Control Board and is now under review for funding by the Environmental Protection Agency. The subcommittee has also considered appropriate funding sources for establishment of a basin-wide system if the demonstration project shows favorable results.

Subcommittee members are devising ways to make real-time water quality management user friendly. Meetings during the coming months will include presentations on geographical interfaces which make real-time data useful to water users and drainage dischargers.

The Water Quality Subcommittee Problems/Issues and Action Program, which is included in this annual report as Appendix C, addresses a number of actions which need careful coordination with the other subcommittees. Examples are changes in water management in wet years which take greater advantage of the increased availability of water to manage overall salt balance in the basin. Properly developed, such an action to improve salt transport offers potential benefits to interests involved in flood protection, water supply, fisheries, and wetland/wildlife. A number of subcommittees have arrived at similar action proposals independently, and the future emphasis of the water quality subcommittee is to work with the others to build consensus on the most mutually beneficial actions. Those will be presented via the Action Team to the Advisory Council to become the basis for the final management plan.

In addition to meeting independently on a monthly basis, the subcommittee has held joint meetings with the water supply and wetland/wildlife subcommittees to explore opportunities to solve problems jointly. Representatives from the following agencies regularly participate in water quality subcommittee meetings and activities: U.S. Geological Survey, Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Resources Defense Council, Department of Water Resources, Department of Fish and Game, State Water Resources Control Board, Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board, Merced County Association of Governments, Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, Modesto Irrigation District, and South Delta Water Agency.

Water Supply Subcommittee

The primary tasks completed by the water supply subcommittee included the formulation of the water supply considerations for potential solutions to problems initially identified by the Action Team in the San Joaquin Basin. The subcommittee prepared a draft report to address the water supply problems, goals, objectives, and proposed actions. The report was reviewed by the various subcommittees and the Action Team. The proposed actions involve and would be compatible with those actions scheduled by the other subcommittees. A copy of this report is found in Appendix D.

Other activities of the subcommittee included initial evaluations of the potential Montgomery Dam and Reservoir and the replacement of Mendota Dam. Montgomery Reservoir is a potential offstream storage facility just north of the Merced River near Snelling. The plan for the reservoir is being formulated by the subcommittee in cooperation with the fisheries and wildlife subcommittees and Merced Irrigation District. The potential sizes of conveyance facilities and reservoir capacities are being evaluated. Winter and early spring spills on the Merced River would be stored in the reservoir. Stored water would then be released to improve spring and winter flows for the salmon fisheries in the Merced River and help improve water quality in the San Joaquin River system.

The water supply subcommittee is also evaluating the replacement of Mendota Dam. A new dam would reduce the downstream leakage. The dam also could maintain a more dependable water level in the Mendota Wildlife Management Area.

The subcommittee's activities in the next year will include refining the two activities previously discussed, along with assisting the other subcommittees in arriving at mutually satisfactory solutions to their water supply needs.

The water supply subcommittee has a core group of representatives from the Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Water Resources, Turlock Irrigation District, Modesto Irrigation District, Merced Irrigation District, Oakdale Irrigation District, South San Joaquin Irrigation District, Friant Water Users, Central California Irrigation District, Grassland Water District, and Westlands Water District. In addition, a mailing list is maintained of other individuals and entities who have expressed interest in the subcommittee's activities. Included on this list are representatives from several basin water districts, San Joaquin Wildlife Rescue Center, several water consultants, and various State and federal agencies.

The water supply subcommittee met monthly for most of the year. Several joint meetings were held with this subcommittee and the water quality, flood control, and wildlife subcommittees during the year.

Wildlife Subcommittee

The primary tasks completed by the wildlife subcommittee during this year included consolidation of the wildlife problems initially identified by the Action Team in the San Joaquin Basin and preparation of a report which identifies the wildlife problems and proposes solutions from a wildlife perspective. The report received review by the other subcommittees and the Action Team. A public workshop was also held to review the document. Generally the proposed solutions, at their current level of detail, were found to be compatible with the other subcommittees' goals. A copy of this report is found in Appendix E.

The subcommittee is also involved in discussions to replace the existing Mendota Dam. Preliminary impacts to fish and wildlife are being evaluated. The project is expected to benefit migratory birds at the State-managed Mendota Wildlife Management Area. Replacement of the dam is one proposed solution made by the wildlife subcommittee. In addition, it is studying the potential impacts to fish and wildlife by the proposed offstream storage reservoir on Dry Creek, a tributary to the Merced River. This work is being done at the request of the water supply subcommittee and is intended to identify the types of problems and mitigation needs that can be expected from an offstream storage project. The water developed by this proposal would be used for fish and wildlife purposes. Both of these impact analyses are preliminary in nature.

The goals for the subcommittee for the upcoming year will be to further refine proposed solutions, integrate ideas into the other subcommittee problem solutions, and attempt to identify costs and benefits of implementing solutions.

The wildlife subcommittee has a core group of representatives from the Fish and Wildlife Service, Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Fish and Game, Grassland Water District, and Turlock Irrigation District. In addition, other individuals who have expressed interest in subcommittee activities are mailed subcommittee minutes and reports. This group has representatives from the Environmental Defense Fund, San Joaquin Wildlife Rescue Center, and various State and federal agencies.

The wildlife subcommittee met monthly during the first half of the past year. Meetings during the second half of the year have been infrequent to allow members to attend other subcommittee meetings, primarily the flood protection and water supply subcommittee meetings.

Fisheries Subcommittee

The focus of the fisheries subcommittee efforts has been on salmon along with work on other native and resident fish problems and solutions. Subcommittee members spent considerable time dealing with the items discussed below. In particular, they evaluated the development of coordinated pulsed spring streamflows to improve young salmon survival in a water-efficient manner. A presentation on this topic was made to the Advisory Council. The Department of Fish and Game later provided this as an alternative for the State Water Resources Control Board to consider as an interim measure in the Bay-Delta hearings.

A water transfer workshop with key water and fishery management agency representatives was sponsored by the subcommittee. Benefits to prospective buyers of San Joaquin Basin water transfers from the water right holders, through the State and federal water export facilities, were reviewed. The Department of Water Resources provided a table defining when capacity in the State Water Project system may be available for transfer. Transfers may offer an opportunity to increase instream flows in a mutually beneficial manner.

The subcommittee developed a draft action plan for San Joaquin fall-run chinook salmon populations in response to the serious declines in these salmon runs (Appendix F). Actions identified in the plan will be encouraged to improve the status of these stocks before more stringent protection under the State and Federal Endangered Species Acts becomes necessary. Followup meetings with key water managers were held to encourage support of instream flow improvements.

A draft table was prepared summarizing the native and resident fish species present in the river upstream of Vernalis as well as the life history and status of these species.

A working list of fishery problems, goals, and objectives was developed. Currently the list is being reviewed by the subcommittee.

Subcommittee members participated in a public workshop featuring the San Joaquin salmon population simulation model. The history, development, model structure, validation, and recent applications of the model were discussed.

Subcommittee input helped to achieve consensus on a Stanislaus County salmon restoration resolution that was developed through coordinated efforts with eight interest groups. The County encouraged salmon hatchery planning in conjunction with physical habitat improvements and increased instream flows.

The subcommittee also provided assistance, input, and feedback to other SJRMP subcommittees and on studies being conducted outside of SJRMP.

Roger Masuda of the Turlock Irrigation District and Bill Loudermilk of the Department of Fish and Game served as co-chairs of the fisheries subcommittee this year. Eleven monthly subcommittee meetings were held. Additionally, three evening meetings with the San Joaquin River System Committee were held to increase public involvement. Representatives from the Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Water Resources, State Water Resources Control Board, Stanislaus County, and Turlock, Merced, Modesto, and Patterson Irrigation Districts regularly attended the subcommittee meetings.

Recreation Subcommittee

The primary goal of the recreation subcommittee is to develop recreational resources which are compatible with the natural resource base and multiple uses of the San Joaquin River system.

Subcommittee actions have been focused on two river segments within the study area: the San Joaquin River between Friant Dam and Highway 99 and the Stanislaus River from Goodwin Dam to Knights Ferry.

A plan for a parkway on the San Joaquin River was completed in April 1992. This planning process was the outcome of AB 3121 (Chapter 1025, Statutes of 1990), which was incorporated by the Advisory Council and Action Team of SJRMP.

Ongoing efforts on the San Joaquin River will be geared toward adoption of the San Joaquin River Parkway Plan into the general plans for Fresno and Madera Counties and the City of Fresno. The first step in this process will be the development of the CEQA documentation for the proposed parkway.

On the Stanislaus River two projects were developed and proposed by the subcommittee: the redistribution of water deliveries to provide for higher instream flows for recreational

purposes during specific time frames and the removal of hazardous instream rock formations in the Goodwin Canyon section of the river which are dangerous impediments to boating activity.

During the next year, the resolution of the rock removal project will be the primary concern for the recreation subcommittee. In addition, providing assistance in the adoption of the San Joaquin River Parkway Plan into the local general plans will also be a high priority.

Secondary priorities will be follow-up on the instream flow redistribution proposal outlined above and the evaluation of recreation activities and potential on the Merced and Tuolumne Rivers.

Recreation subcommittee members include representatives from the Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, California Department of Boating and Waterways, California Department of Parks and Recreation, San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust, City of Firebaugh, and the private sector. A report on subcommittee activities, problems, and goals is included in this report as Appendix G.